

MISSOURI. Conservationist

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Banding Together for Birds

Like many Missourians, I eagerly anticipate the arrival of fall each year. Along with crisp days and colorful landscapes, migrating birds add to the sights, sounds and outdoor opportunities that come

with the season. Conserving the birds that breed, spend the winter or migrate through Missouri demands careful study and cooperation with hunters, wildlife watchers and partners throughout North America.

A key technique used in bird conservation is banding, the practice of placing uniquely numbered metal or plastic strips on live birds that are subsequently released. When a banded bird is later observed, trapped or harvested, the information from the encounter provides clues to the bird's movements, survival, mortality and other important data that assists in conservation decisions.

Because birds travel long distances, the North American Bird Banding Program is an international effort, jointly administered by the United States Geological Survey and the Canadian Wildlife Service. On average, approximately 1.2 million birds are banded in the U.S. each year, and about 87,000 encounters with banded birds are reported. In Missouri, Conservation Department biologists band approximately 1,200 wood ducks and 2,000 Canada geese each year, and about 90 wood duck and 490 Canada goose bands are recovered. These band recoveries form the backbone of waterfowl population management. Band recoveries have helped identify the migration corridors, or flyways, used by waterfowl. Band recoveries also help determine the distribution of waterfowl harvest and help us learn how far birds travel from their banding location, what routes they follow and where they spend the winter. This information is important because it highlights when and where management efforts should be focused to be most effective. Information from hunters helps



determine if the rate of harvest differs by location and whether harvest regulations should differ by state or flyway.

Harvest information provides other important insights. For example, based on banding information, we know that more than 50 percent of the ducks harvested in Missouri originate from the Canadian prairies. As a result, the Department has developed cooperative projects with partners such as Ducks Unlimited in Canada to ensure breeding habitat is available each year and the tradition of waterfowl hunting continues in Missouri. In addition, Missouri is one of 14 states in the Mississippi Flyway that helps maintain a station in Yorkton, Saskatchewan.

Bird banding is a universal and indispensable technique for studying the movement, survival and behavior of birds. It helps us understand and monitor the relationships among breeding areas, migration routes and wintering areas and the contribution of each toward maintaining bird populations that cross both state and international boundaries. Hunters and wildlife watchers are integral participants in the bird-banding program and through band-recovery reporting contribute toward the management of waterfowl populations.

Get out and enjoy the fall, and if you see or harvest a banded bird, be sure to report it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Robert L. Ziehmer'.

Robert L. Ziehmer, director

OUR MISSION: *To protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state; to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities; and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources.*



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AIMING FOR THE FUTURE

Thank you, Rebecca, for writing an article that hit the bull's-eye about MDC's shooting ranges—a subject that is near and dear to my family [September; Page 14].

We frequent the Jay Henges Shooting Range for many reasons but mostly because our children are members of the Team Henges Trap Shooting Team. We have used all aspects of the range over the years, never to be disappointed. From Hunter Education classes to sighting in for deer season, and now shooting trap, the entire staff of employees and volunteers are professional, informative and excited to work with you. It's always safety first, followed closely with instruction and topped off with a friendly hand extended. We don't just learn gun and bow skills at the MDC ranges, we learn life skills. The greatest of these lessons is

RESPECT, respect for the weapons we are using and respect for the other person standing next to us at the range. It is respect that is conveyed by each and every person at Jay Henges who wears an MDC patch on their shirt.

Mike & Virginia Young, House Springs

FROM ROLLA TO KUWAIT

I am an Army Reservist and was deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, in February 2010, in support of operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. In the building where I worked, there was a table where packages from various organizations and U.S. citizens were placed for any soldier to take. One day as I was looking at the items on the table, I noticed a *Missouri Conservationist* magazine and, being from Missouri, I picked it up and took it with me to

read. I noticed on the back that the person who donated the magazine was a lady from Rolla and that's where I lived. Coincidence? Perhaps, but I was a bit excited to say the least.

Military men and women are voracious readers and will read just about anything. I read the magazine through and then went back to look at the credits page listing who the folks were who worked on the magazine and at the Missouri Department of Conservation. Then I went online and requested a subscription for me and the kids' magazine for my kids. It was one of the things I really looked forward to each month when my wife would send a care package.

The *Missouri Conservationist* makes an impact even in countries on the other side of the world. Thanks for the good work and the opportunity to read about Missouri wildlife and conservation efforts. Unfortunately, I left that particular *Conservationist* magazine in Kuwait when I redeployed, so I do not have the lady's name who sent it, but I would like to tell her thanks! Her gift brought joy to a deployed soldier.

Chad Pense, Rolla



Reader Photo CAT CALLS

The Rev. Joe Classen captured this photo of a bobcat while deer hunting in Phelps County. "I had just finished setting up a tree stand—in the middle of the day—climbed up, pulled up my bow, and I heard footsteps coming through the woods in my direction," says Classen. "Thinking it was a deer, I got into position ... but then I saw this nice big cat sneaking along. I made some rabbit squeal calls with my mouth, and he came right to the tree. I was able to get his attention long enough for a couple of good photos before he moved on."

CRAWMOM

My wife and I moved to our house in 2009, and we held a July 4 BBQ to celebrate the occasion. Mid-evening I was alerted by my father to this "thing" crawling up the sidewalk. What was it? At the time, I referred to it as "The Crawl mom," as it appeared to be a female crawdad carrying her young up the sidewalk! We were perplexed as to why and how a crawdad was that far away from a body of water.

Sadly, this past spring, I found her body in my yard, seemingly passed away from old age. However, I think that one of her young still occupies the den under our front-yard flower bed as the entrance is always freshly cleaned out. Also, if you come out at mid-evening, you can see what looks like a head pulling itself back into the den.

Thank you for the August issue and for clearing up my family's two-year curiosity! [*Prairie Crayfish*; Page 28] I am amazed almost daily at the wildlife in Missouri, and the joy it brings to my family. The citizens of this state sure are lucky to have a free publication.

Gardner J. C. Cole, Columbia



DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

Phone: 573-751-4115
Address: PO Box 180,
Jefferson City 65102-0180

REGIONAL OFFICES

Southeast/Cape Girardeau: 573-290-5730
Central/Columbia: 573-884-6861
Kansas City: 816-622-0900
Northeast/Kirksville: 660-785-2420
Southwest/Springfield: 417-895-6880
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SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Address: Circulation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City 65102-0180
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OMBUDSMAN QUESTIONS

Phone: 573-522-4115, ext. 3848
Address: Ombudsman, PO Box 180,
Jefferson City 65102-0180
E-mail: Ombudsman@mdc.mo.gov

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Phone: 573-522-4115, ext. 3847 or 3245
Address: Magazine Editor, PO Box 180,
Jefferson City 65102-0180
E-mail: Magazine@mdc.mo.gov

READER PHOTO SUBMISSIONS

Flickr: www.flickr.com/groups/readerphotos
E-mail: Readerphoto@mdc.mo.gov
Address: Missouri Conservationist, Reader Photo,
PO Box 180, Jefferson City 65102-0180

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Editor In Chief Ara Clark
Managing Editor Nichole LeClair Terrill
Art Director Cliff White
Staff Writer Bonnie Chasteen
Staff Writer Jim Low
Photographer Noppadol Paothong
Photographer David Stonner
Designer Stephanie Thurber
Artist Mark Raithel
Circulation Laura Scheuler

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Sight In Deer Rifles On MDC Ranges

If you haven't checked the sights on your deer rifle, now is the time, and MDC shooting ranges are the places. Target shooting on conservation areas is permitted only on approved shooting ranges. To provide citizens with safe and convenient places to shoot, MDC offers more than 70 unstaffed shooting ranges throughout the state. MDC also manages five staffed shooting ranges with a variety of shooting opportunities and outdoor programs. Some MDC shooting ranges are accessible to hunters with mobility impairments. Many have multiple shooting stations with covered shooting benches, target holders and pit privies. To find one near you, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/6209.

E-Permits Offer Convenience

When planning for fall hunting, trapping and fishing, remember that you have your choice of buying permits through vendors, as in the past,

or buying online or by phone from the comfort of home.

The e-Permits System allows you to purchase, print and immediately use permits from any computer with Internet access. All Missouri sport-hunting and sport-fishing permits, along with trapping permits and the Apprentice Hunter Authorization are available online. You can get the same permits by calling toll free 800-392-4115.

Phone purchases are subject to a \$2 processing fee and require up to a two-week wait time to receive the permits through U.S. mail. The fee for e-Permits is \$1. Keep in mind that the service fee is a per-transaction charge, so if you buy all your permits at once, you only pay \$1. There is no processing fee for permits purchased from vendors.

Commercial permits and lifetime permits continue to be sold through MDC's Central Office by calling 573-751-4115.

Deer and turkey tagging procedures have changed with e-Permits. The key information to remember is, "Bag it. Notch it. Tag it. Check it." Hunters, anglers and trappers are encouraged to put paper e-Permits inside zipper-type plastic bags to protect them from moisture and other damage.

Deer and turkey e-Permits do not include a removable transportation tag. Instead, the permit itself is the transportation tag. Deer and turkey permits have months printed along one edge and dates on another edge. Hunters must notch the month and day as part of recording their harvested game. A sharp knife works well to notch permits.

Hunters then must tag their game by attaching the protected permit to their harvested deer or turkey. String, twist-ties, wire, plastic cable ties or tape work well for this step.

As in years past, deer and turkey hunters must check harvested animals by phone or online through MDC's Telecheck system.

For more information or to buy e-Permits, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/10900. Transportation bags for permits are available on a limited basis from regional offices and conservation agents.

Blue Catfish Study In Second Year

MDC biologists are winding up the second year of a blue catfish study at Truman Lake and Lake of the Ozarks. The goal of the three-year study is to gather data on blue catfish populations, fish size and growth rates. Anglers, fisheries biologists and conservation agents have expressed concern since the 1980s about declining numbers of large blue catfish in Truman Lake. The same concerns have arisen in recent years at Lake of the Ozarks. Blue catfish populations remain abundant, but the number of fish in the 20- to 80-pound range has declined as fishing pressure has increased. MDC crews will run jug lines through late autumn. The catfish caught are weighed, measured and released. Biologists also remove spines from some fish to gather age and growth data. Fisheries biologists will use information from the study, along with comments and survey responses from anglers, to determine if regulation changes are needed at the two lakes to produce more large catfish.—Bill Graham

Conservation Greats Honored

George K. Brakhage and Donald M. Christisen are the two most recent inductees into Missouri's Conservation Hall of Fame.

Brakhage's 40-year career included jobs in state and federal government and the private sector. He helped establish Duck Creek Conservation Area, documented the nesting ecology of resident giant Canada geese, developed waterfowl habitat management techniques, and played a key role in establishing nontoxic shot requirements for waterfowl hunting. He also authored a National Waterfowl Management Plan. In the final phase of his career, Mr. Brakhage returned to Missouri to assist with fundraising

efforts for waterfowl habitat conservation by working for Ducks Unlimited. He retired in 1992, but continued to serve conservation through numerous volunteer efforts until shortly before his death in 2009.

During his 42-year career with MDC, Christisen identified an ominous decline in Missouri's prairie-chicken population. He worked to preserve remnant prairies and native prairie-chicken stock and helped form the Missouri Prairie Foundation. Christisen continued to play a key role in prairie-land acquisitions and prairie-chicken restoration. His research is a key reference for prairie-chicken managers today. Christisen served twice as chairman of the Prairie Grouse Technical Coun-

cil, which honored him with the Hamerstrom Award. His other honors included the Wildlife Conservationist of the Year Award and the Gulf Oil Conservation Award for Professionals.

The Conservation Commission also recently presented the Master Conservationist Award to retired Senior Wildlife Research Biologist Leroy Korschgen. Korschgen spent 37 years studying the diets of wildlife from bullfrogs to mountain lions. While studying the food habits of the cottontail rabbit, he discovered that no published reference was available to help identify finely masticated plant fragments in the rabbit stomachs. To fill this information vacuum, he "fingerprinted" more than 2,500 species of plants.



ASK THE OMBUDSMAN

Q: What is the aerial swarming behavior of birds that you see in the fall? What kind of birds swarm, and what is the reason for it?

A: Those tight flocks or swarms of birds are called crèches. In Missouri, they are primarily composed of European starling or red-winged blackbird juveniles. The birds will move across the sky in synchronized flight, with twisting and turning movements that make them appear to be a single large organism. Crèches have been described as day-care systems for young birds. Aerial predators, such as hawks, are unlikely to attack birds that are surrounded by hundreds of other birds. Food resources can be used more efficiently when the whole crèche moves into a feeding area. With the juvenile birds in the crèche, adult birds no longer need to care for their young. For some amazing videos of this behavior, search YouTube for "starling swarm."

Q: Why are there few weed beds in the Lake of the Ozarks?

A: Areas of the lake where banks are steep and the water is deep do not support aquatic plants that could grow

in shallow water, where more light can reach the plants for photosynthesis. The abundance of common carp in the Lake of the Ozarks, and in Missouri's other large reservoirs, also restricts the growth of aquatic plants. Carp feed by rooting in the bottom sediments of lakes in search of aquatic worms, insects and other prey. They effectively uproot any plants that might otherwise become established. Enclosures constructed at some reservoirs have brought only limited success in keeping carp and aquatic turtles away from plants.



Ombudsman Tim Smith will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Department of Conservation programs. Write him at PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573-522-4115, ext. 3848, or email him at Ombudsman@mdc.mo.gov.

After 6 years of difficult and tedious work, he published 10 illustrated volumes documenting the microscopic characteristics of Missouri plants.

Korschgen also was instrumental in developing a laboratory test to identify venison, giving conservation agents a valuable tool against poachers. He made significant contributions in identifying the negative impacts of dieldrin and other pesticides on wildlife.

Buy Natural Events Calendar Now!

If you want a copy of the 2012 *Natural Events Calendar*, buy it now. Supplies are limited and may not last until the end of the year. As always, this year's calendar has dozens of jaw-dropping nature photographs. The cover image, by frequent photo contributor Danny Brown, shows eight trumpeter swans bathed in the orange light of a midwinter sunrise. Eagles, elk, turkeys, wood ducks, a hummingbird and a short-eared owl are among other wildlife depicted in the

2012 calendar. Land and waterscapes from across the Show-Me State also grace the calendar's pages. Besides daily notes about natural events from great horned owl nesting (Feb. 5) to meteor showers (Nov. 17), this year's *Natural Events Calendar* takes a look back at 75 years of conservation under the famed "Missouri Plan." You can have all this for a mere \$7 through MDC's online Nature Shop, mdcnatureshop.com, or by calling 877-521-8632. Or, save shipping and handling charges by buying your copy at a conservation nature center or one of the regional offices listed on Page 3. Conservation Heritage Card holders get a 15-percent discount.

Youth Waders Available at Three CAs

Positive hunting experiences are key to getting youngsters interested in hunting. Keeping them warm and dry is a good first step. To make this possible, the Missouri Waterfowl Association (MWA) and Bass Pro Shops (BPS) provide insulated neoprene waders at three of MDC's managed wetland areas.

Nodaway Valley, Eagle Bluffs and Four Rivers conservation areas (CAs) each have high-quality waders in a variety of youth sizes thanks to the MWA-BPS partnership. If you plan to hunt one of these areas with a young-

ster who is without waders, simply check in with the area staff when you arrive for your hunt.

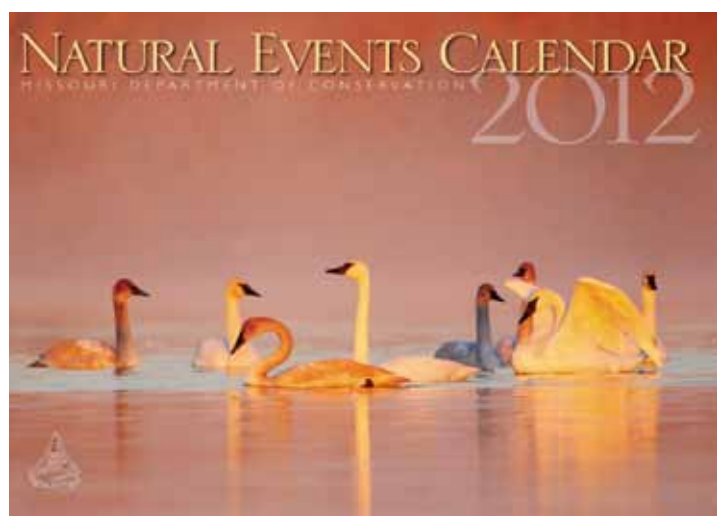
The Missouri Waterfowl Association is dedicated to the advancement of waterfowl hunting and the preservation of Missouri's waterfowling heritage. To achieve these goals, MWA hosts youth hunts and provides funding and assistance for youth hunting clinics. MWA has built and installed hundreds of wood duck houses statewide and works with partners to maintain them. It was instrumental in making ADA-compliant blinds available at Grand Pass and Eagle Bluffs CAs. MWA has also been an important financial partner in the habitat restoration at Montrose CA as part of the Golden Anniversary Wetland Initiative. To learn more about MWA, visit www.mowaterfowl.org.

McGee Family CA Dedication

In September, MDC dedicated the McGee Family Conservation Area (CA), a gift from Kansas City businessman Thomas F. McGee Jr., who died in January 2010. The CA covers nearly 1,000 acres near Plattsburg. McGee loved nature and enjoyed sharing the outdoors at the farm with others, said his cousin, Thomas R. McGee of Kansas City.

"Tom loved bringing people up here," McGee said. "Hunting quail was a passion of his and he'd come up here and hunt morel mushrooms in the spring."

Former Conservation Commissioner Anita Gorman, of Kansas City, said McGee wanted to be sure his beloved land remained in its natural condition.



McGee Family CA is not open for public use yet, but someday the area will offer hunting, hiking and other outdoor pursuits. The area currently is primarily pastureland on rolling terrain, with two ponds and frontage on the Little Platte River.

"Tom McGee understood conservation," said MDC Director Bob Ziehmer. "He understood pleasure and harmony on this land. What Tom did with this donation is share that with future generations."

To learn how you can share your love of nature with future generations, call Aaron Jeffries, assistant to director-governmental relations, at 573-751-4115.—*Bill Graham*

Thinking About a Timber Sale?

Caring for your woodland is a long-term proposition where one decision can have impacts for decades. A new outreach effort, Call Before You Cut, provides information to help Missouri woodland owners conduct tree harvests wisely.

"Although woodland owners know a lot about their woods, they often don't have the critical information they need before selecting someone to harvest their trees," said Brian Schweiss, forestry field program supervisor for the Missouri Department of Conservation. The Call Before You Cut campaign encourages landowners to call 877-564-7483 toll-free for free information. A live operator is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays except holidays. Callers receive information packets to help them set up timber sales and other management information for their woodlands.

The program puts landowners in touch with professional foresters who can tell them how much their trees are worth, which trees should be harvested soon and which ones can grow for greater profits later. Call Before You Cut gives landowners options they might not have considered.

"Over the years, I've learned a lot about how to keep my woods healthy and beautiful," said Dave Murphy, a landowner from Clark County, "but I'm smart enough to know that I don't know everything. I didn't want to make any mistakes with my own land. By working with a professional forester, I was able to make money, maintain healthy woods, and improve food and cover for turkeys, one of my favorite wildlife species to view and hunt."

Call Before You Cut can help ensure healthy,

productive woodlands for landowners and a healthy forest industry for years to come. More information is available at callbeforeyoutocut.com.

Good News for Turkeys and Hunters

Given one nesting season free of late freezes or frog-strangling rains, Missouri's wild turkey flock has pulled off one of the best hatches in several years. Results of the annual Wild Turkey Brood Survey revealed a state-wide ratio of 1.7 poult per hen. That is a dramatic increase from the past four years, when the ratio has varied from 1.0 to 1.2 poult per hen. Missouri's wild-turkey flock has not had nest success and poult survival this good since 2002.

"This year's poult-to-hen ratio is certainly a step in the right direction after the poor hatches we've had the past several years," said MDC turkey biologist Jason Isabelle. "A statewide ratio of 1.7 for a few years in a row would have a fairly dramatic impact on turkey numbers."

Wild turkeys and other ground-nesting wildlife



Turkey poults

have suffered through a series of cold springs and unprecedented summer rainfall. This year is the first in five with near-average spring temperatures and without repeated, heavy summer rains.

For more information on regional poult-to-hen ratios, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/16163.

Did You Know?

Hunters and anglers care about protecting fish and wildlife.

Protecting Missouri's Resources

» **1-800-392-1111**—this Operation Game Thief (OGT) hotline provides a way for citizens to anonymously report poaching incidents with the opportunity for a monetary reward.

» **819 calls** were made to the OGT hotline in 2010.

» **302 convictions** were produced through calls to OGT in 2010.

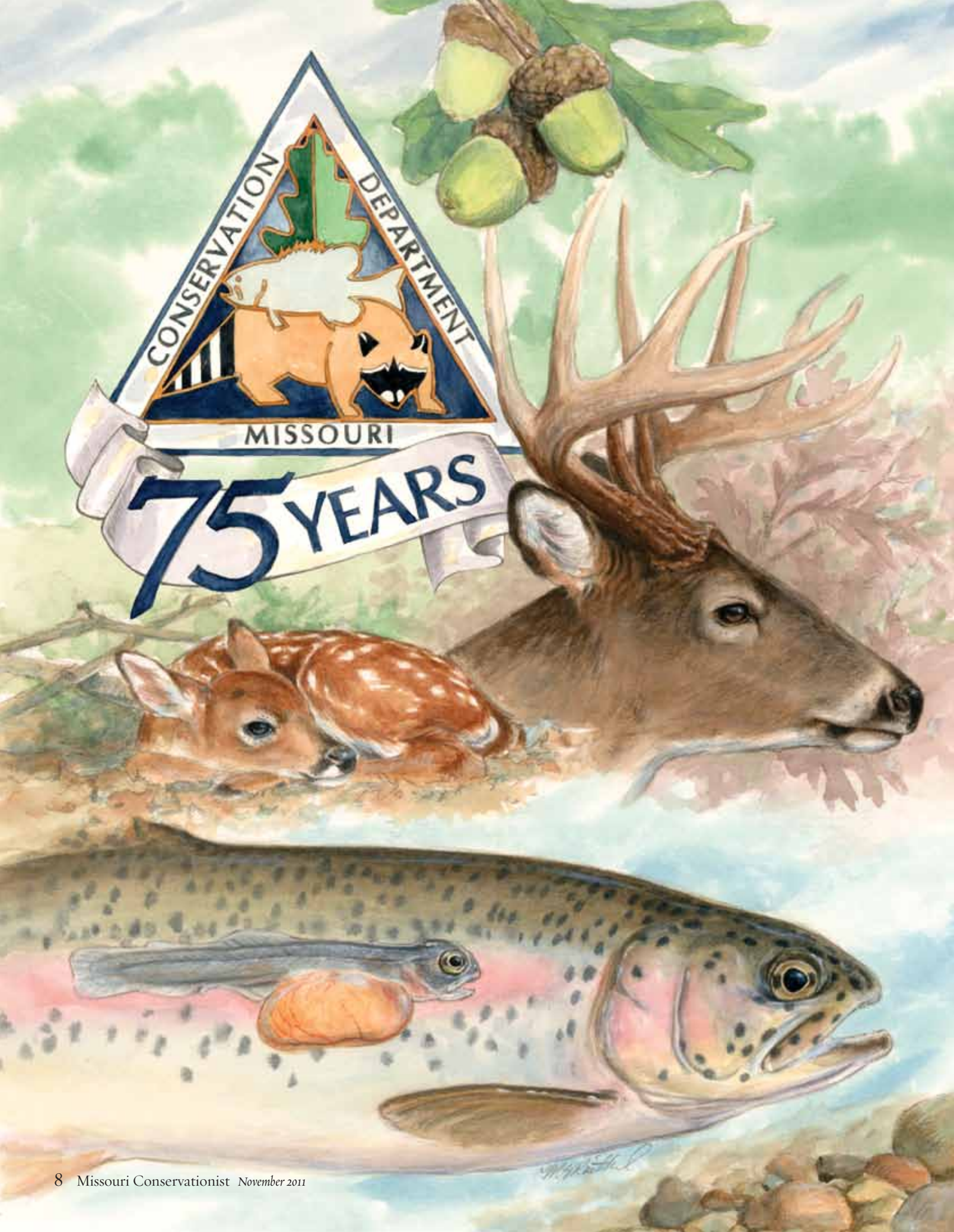
» **\$12,750 in reward money** was paid to OGT informants last year.

» **Missouri is one of 36 states** participating in the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact. Member states agree to reciprocally honor revocations/suspensions of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for wildlife-related violations.

» **1,654 people from other states** had their privileges revoked in Missouri last year through the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact.

» **187,525 hunters and anglers** were contacted by conservation agents last year to ensure compliance and to provide regulation information. During these contacts, agents noted 25,900 resource violations, issued 3,218 written warnings, and made 7,285 arrests.

» **92 percent** of the 7,285 arrests agents made last year resulted in guilty pleas or verdicts. This high conviction rate indicates excellent public support and high-quality work by agents.

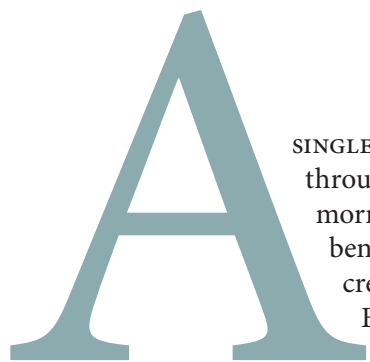


Missouri's Unique Conservation Legacy



The Missouri Department of Conservation is celebrating our 75th anniversary. The beginning of Missouri's unique citizen-led conservation story is featured here. Many of the successful partnerships and programs that have helped to restore the fish, forest and wildlife resources of Missouri, as well as the challenges ahead, will be highlighted in the *Conservationist* over the next year.

by BRETT DUFUR



SINGLE CANNON BLAST SLICED through the silence of a quiet morning on a Missouri River bend on July 4, 1804. The crew of the Lewis & Clark Expedition was celebrating the first official

observance of Independence Day in the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase territory. The site today is known as Little Bean Marsh Conservation Area, located 30 miles north of Kansas City.

Among the entries in William Clark's journal that day were observations of extensive prairies, rivers, a great number of goslings, and a clear lake containing vast quantities of fish and geese. He didn't write about the oppressive July heat and humidity, the "mosquitos" or the hardships endured. Instead, Clark wrote about the abundance and variety of wildlife, which was stunning even to this veteran explorer.

"The Plains of this country are covered with a Green Grass, well calculated for the sweetest and most norushing hay, interspersed with... trees, Spreading ther lofty branches over Pools Springs or Brooks of fine water... Shrubs covered with the most delicious froot is to be seen in every direction, and nature appears to have exerted herself to butify the Senery by the variety of flours raiseing Delicately and highly... above the Grass, which Strikes & profumes the Sensation, and amuses the mind, throws it into Conjecturing the

cause of So magnificent a Senery... in a Country thus Situated far removed from the Sivilised world to be enjoyed by nothing but the Buffalo Elk Deer & Bear in which it abounds."

His awe of the natural beauty he saw here is a powerful testament to the connection people have always felt for this land. Yet it would take only a generation of early settlers to forge an entirely different Missouri than what Clark had described.

FROM WILDLIFE DEPLETION TO CONSERVATION ACTION

By the 1860s, the insatiable demand for fur, feathers and meat had virtually emptied the forests. Relentless commercial hunting was rampant and unchecked. By the late 1800s, the largest lumber mill in the world came to the Ozarks to feed the booming railroad industry's thirst for railroad ties and a growing nation's need for wood products. In 1912 alone, 15 million hand-hewn railroad ties were sold in Missouri. It was also an age when a third of the Ozarks were burned each year in an effort to bring up the grasses for livestock. Missouri's forests were soon depleted.

By the 1930s, the country was in the grips of the Great Depression. Our national trust of soil, water and wildlife were becoming similarly bankrupt. The existing Missouri Department of Game was largely a token gesture that had been weakened by powerful interests and left underfunded. Many Missourians had a deep-seated feeling that things could be better—that even

THE NORTH AMERICAN MODEL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is an important set of conservation principles, policies and philosophy that has led to the protection, conservation and restoration of wildlife populations in North America.

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is built on a foundation of principles, called the Seven Pillars:

❶ WILDLIFE AS A PUBLIC TRUST RESOURCE Wildlife belongs to all citizens, not any one individual, and is held in trust by government for the benefit of present and future generations.

❷ ELIMINATION OF MARKETS FOR WILDLIFE Many game species were nearly decimated by unregulated market hunting and some species were lost forever. Preventing over-exploitation and managing sustainable use is a continuous goal of conservation.

❸ ALLOCATION OF WILDLIFE BY LAW Achieving wildlife benefits for present and future generations means regulations to protect and allocate wildlife resources.

❹ HARVEST FOR LEGITIMATE PURPOSES Hunting and trapping are legitimate and, in some cases, necessary for management but must be carried out in ways acceptable to society. This principle includes concerns about wanton waste, protection of property, personal protection and use.

❺ WILDLIFE IS AN INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE Many wildlife species, such as waterfowl, transcend national boundaries and their management requires international agreement and cooperation.

❻ SCIENCE-BASED WILDLIFE POLICY Science and good information will assist in making wildlife management decisions.

❼ DEMOCRACY OF HUNTING One of the most important aspects is that all citizens have access to the wildlife resources, including the tradition and heritage of hunting.



By the 1860s, Missouri's natural resources and wildlife were depleted through overuse and overhunting.

though Missouri's natural resources had been squandered through overuse, proper government regulation could help restore wildlife in Missouri. This ultimately set the stage for Missouri's citizen-led effort to restore Missouri's fish, forest and wildlife resources 75 years ago.

MISSOURI'S CITIZEN-LED EFFORTS TAKE ROOT

On Sept. 10, 1935, nearly 100 sportsmen met at the Tiger Hotel in Columbia to discuss what could be done. They formed the Restoration and Conservation Federation of Missouri and devised a solution that was as simple as it was revolutionary. Columbia newspaper publisher E. Sydney Stephens, who became one of the leaders of the movement and later one of MDC's first commissioners, summed things up, "If you get a law passed, what have you got?" he asked. "The next legislature could repeal or amend it, and the politicians take over. By the same token, if you attempt to get a constitutional amendment through the legislature, you won't recognize it when it comes out. But if you write the basic authority exactly as you want it, put it on the ballot through the initiative and let the people vote it into the constitution—then you've got something permanent."

So they drafted Amendment 4, aimed at creating an apolitical conservation agency. Sportsmen fanned out



E. Sydney Stephens of Columbia led the successful effort in 1936 to make conservation in Missouri professional and apolitical. He announced at the first Conservation Commission meeting in 1937: "All life begins with the soil. Let us, then, begin with the soil."

across the state and gathered signatures to put the proposal on the ballot. On Nov. 3, 1936, voters approved the measure by a margin of 71 to 29 percent—one of the largest margins by which any amendment to the state constitution had ever passed. The sportsmen's vision had prevailed.

On July 1, 1937, the constitutional amendment creating the Missouri Conservation Commission took effect, creating an apolitical, science-based conservation agency with exclusive authority over forests, fish and wildlife. Over the next 75 years, the "Missouri plan" allowed the Show-Me State to build what is acknowledged as one of the nation's top conservation programs. Today that Commission is more commonly referred to as the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC).

"Everything was new," recalls MDC's first chief of wildlife research, Bill Crawford, who retired after pro-

viding leadership in that role for 34 years. "It was an opportunistic time when we could find problems and really start to work on them."

Since that historic night at the Tiger Hotel, a series of unprecedented conservation and wildlife restoration efforts have been accomplished. "Not in their wildest imaginations could those early sportsmen have imagined what has been achieved," says Dave Murphy, executive director of the Conservation Federation of Missouri. "On the same landscape, at the same time that our human population has doubled, we've seen the restoration of wild turkey, deer, geese, river otters, raccoons and black bass, and every kind of game species that you can imagine."

MISSOURI'S UNIQUE CITIZEN-LED CONSERVATION LEGACY

Missouri conservation is unique—unique in its history, unique in the way it derives its authority and funding



MDC DIRECTORS THROUGH THE YEARS

The Department's director is hired by an unpaid, Conservation Commission, rather than being appointed by the governor. This provision provides the Department with a great amount of stability.



from citizens, and unique in the passion and commitment of Missourians to perpetuate this legacy. The Show-Me State's conservation efforts have a broad management base giving consideration to forests, fish and all species of wildlife.

The Conservation Commission serves Missourians by ensuring citizens have healthy forests, fish and wildlife throughout the state. To achieve conservation successes the Commission and Department staff strive to promote cooperation between the Department, landowners and the public through scientific information and mutual understanding. Conservation successes such as stable

deer and turkey populations indicate this partnership and approach has worked in Missouri.

The Department's director is hired by an unpaid, citizen Conservation Commission, rather than being appointed by the governor. This provision provides the Department with a great amount of stability and permanence that benefit citizens and Missouri's fish, forest and wildlife resources.

Over the past 75 years, the Conservation Department has had only eight directors. The current director of the Department is Robert L. Ziehmer. His predecessors include I. T. Bode, 1937–1957; William Towell, 1957–1966; Carl Noren, 1967–1979; Larry Gale, 1979–1988; Jerry Presley, 1988–1997; Jerry Conley, 1997–2002; and John Hoskins, 2002–2009.

The Commission is made up of four commissioners, with no more than two from the same political party. The governor appoints commissioners for six-year unpaid terms. The Commission serves as the Department's policy maker, approves *Wildlife Code* regulations, and oversees strategic planning, budget development and major expenditures.

The first members of the Commission were E. Sydney Stephens, A. P. Greensfelder, Wilbur C. Buford and John F. Case. Current Commissioners include Don R. Johnson of Festus; James T. Blair, IV of St. Louis; Don C. Bedell of Sikeston; and Becky L. Plattner of Grand Pass.

DESIGN FOR CONSERVATION

Forty years after their initial achievement, the Conservation Federation of Missouri decided that for conservation to become a permanent reality, it needed a broad, stable financial base. The vision, called the Design for Conservation, was proposed to Missouri citizens in 1970. It was a long-reaching strategic plan for conservation in Missouri. It included a pledge to obtain land for recreation, forestry and protection of critical habitat.



Missouri has a long history of successful restoration efforts. In the mid-1800s, wild turkey were brought to near extinction. Today, all 114 Missouri counties now have huntable turkey populations. Restoring prairie chickens to Missouri is a top priority of current conservation efforts.



Design also called for increased services to the public in the areas of wildlife and forest conservation, and for conservation nature centers throughout Missouri.

To fund the Design for Conservation, citizens petitioned to put another constitutional amendment, Amendment 1, on the ballot in 1975. The petition garnered 208,000 signatures of support, more than double the minimum required to place the proposed amendment on the ballot. The amendment called for a one-eighth of 1 percent sales tax. The vote in November of 1976 allowed for the implementation of Design for Conservation.

The conservation sales tax, as it became known, means that for every \$8 spent on taxable items, one penny goes to conservation. This dedicated sales tax provides consistent funding for the long-term efforts required for the conservation of forests, fish and wildlife. The Department received \$95,818,338 in fiscal year 2011 as a result of the conservation sales tax. This revenue makes up about 58 percent of the Department's annual operating budget—no money from the state's general revenue goes to the Department. These numbers sound impres-

sive, yet MDC's entire budget is comparable to less than 1 percent of the entire state government budget. And conservation pays its way in Missouri—the amount of state sales tax revenue generated from fish and wildlife recreation and the forest products industry is about the same as the sales tax revenue received by MDC from the conservation sales tax.

MISSOURIANS CARE ABOUT CONSERVATION

Missourians have achieved some amazing results. We have restored and conserved dozens of fish and wildlife species, ensured that Missouri is a great place to hunt and fish, transformed forestry into a sustainable industry, created a system devoted to serving both rural and urban private landowners, invested in the hearts of major urban areas to encourage participation in the outdoors, developed an accessible network of public lands and facilities, and partnered the entire way with citizens and communities throughout the state.

Conservation enriches our economy and our quality of life. Today, conservation—wise use—of forest, fish



Wise use of forest, fish and wildlife resources has a tremendous positive impact at the individual, family, community and state levels.

and wildlife resources has a proven and important track record. These resources have a tremendous positive impact at the individual, family, community and state levels. The combined numbers generated by hunting and fishing, wildlife watching and forest industries show the importance of conservation in our state. It supports approximately 95,000 Missouri jobs, involves many Missourians through active participation and generates positive business revenue for the state of more than \$11.4 billion annually.

Looking back, America's brush with an unwise management approach of natural resources certainly kindled

a passion for wildlife stewardship. Conservationist Aldo Leopold noted that this zeal seemed to burn intensely in Missouri. Speaking at a gathering in 1947, he said:

"Conservation, at bottom, rests on the conviction that there are things in this world more important than dollar signs and ciphers. Many of these other things attach to the land, and to the life that is on it and in it. People who know these other things have been growing scarcer, but less so in Missouri than elsewhere. That is why conservation is possible here. If conservation can become a living reality, it can do so in Missouri. This is because Missourians, in my opinion, are not completely industrialized in mind and spirit, and I hope never will be."

If you agree with Aldo Leopold and are not yet "thoroughly industrialized," find a way to get involved locally in conservation. You will be joining a long line of Missourians who have made the Show-Me State a beacon of conservation achievement for the rest of the world. Visit mdc.mo.gov to learn about conservation opportunities throughout the state.

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Conservation Department, such a milestone offers an opportunity to reflect upon past challenges and chart a course for future opportunities. Through the years, the men and women who have contributed to the conservation movement have changed. But the Department's mission is still the same—to manage and protect the forests, fish and wildlife of the state. It's a mission that provides Missourians the opportunity to enjoy our natural resources today while leaving those resources in better shape for future generations. ▲

OTHER REVENUES THAT SUPPORT MISSOURI'S CONSERVATION LEGACY

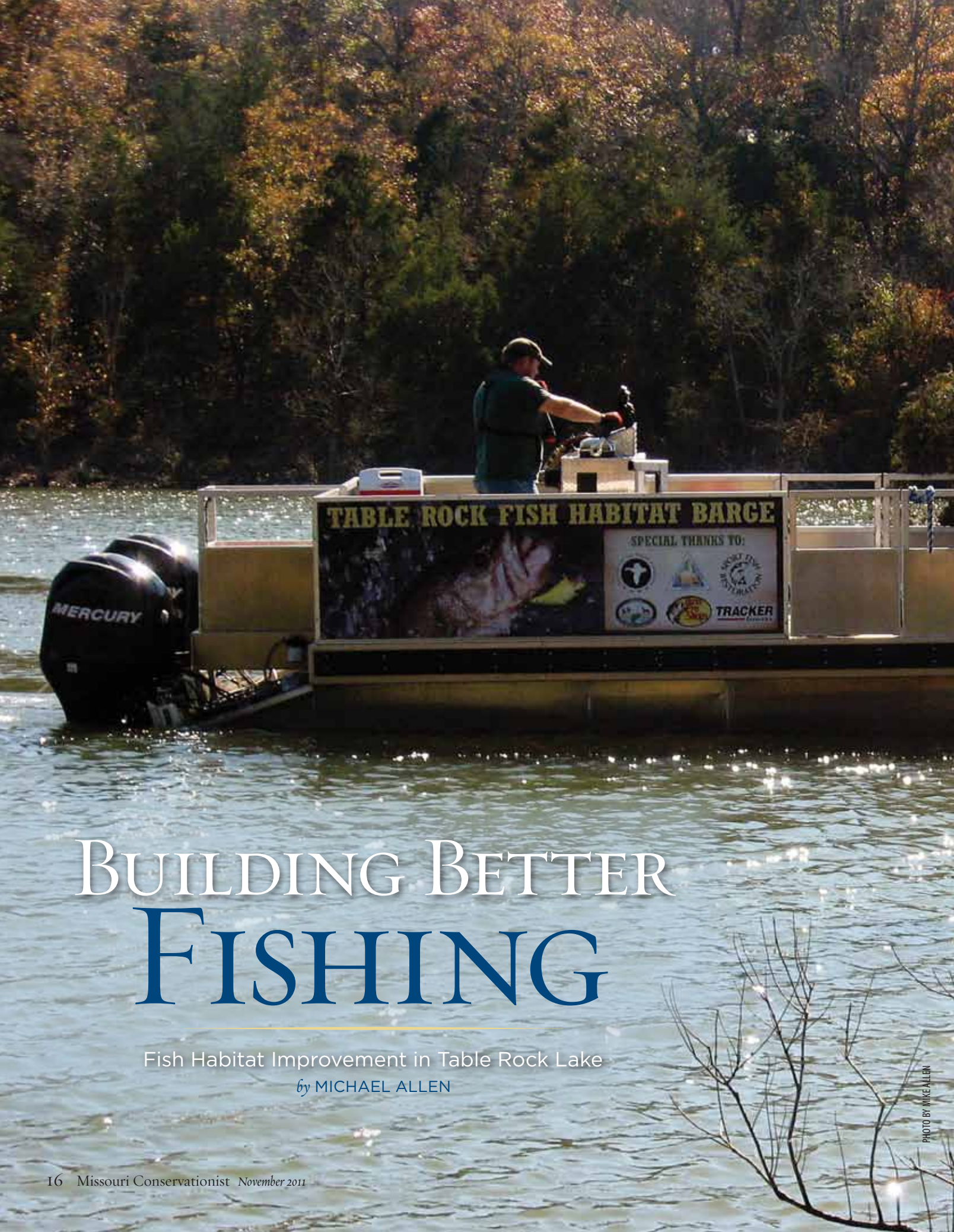
For more than 75 years, sportsmen have been buying hunting and fishing licenses. These funds are vital to restore habitat, purchase public lands, and bring back Missouri's fish and wildlife populations. When a person purchases a hunting or fishing license, they are investing

those dollars in conservation for the benefit of all Missourians and future generations. Fishing and hunting licenses account for approximately 20 percent of the Department's annual revenue, totaling more than \$31 million.

MDC also receives about \$22 million a year from federal

sources, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs. The Wildlife Restoration Program, originally called the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937, is a program funded by taxes on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. Those funds are specifically provided to states to restore, conserve, manage and enhance fish and wildlife. The Sport Fish Restoration Program,

created by the Dingell-Johnson Act of 1950, is funded by taxes on fishing tackle, motorboat fuel, electric outboard motors and sonar equipment. Funds are distributed to states for sport fish restoration, motorboat access development and aquatic resource education. Federal aid also comes from the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.



BUILDING BETTER FISHING

Fish Habitat Improvement in Table Rock Lake

by MICHAEL ALLEN



HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU thought, “This place would be loaded with fish if only there was some cover in here,” or bemoaned the loss of trees or structures that produced great fishing? Many fishing spots change over time due to the loss or creation of good habitat. Fisheries biologists help situations like this by placing brushpiles and trees in locations where habitat is lacking or needs some improvement.

Most of these habitat projects are aimed at covering one cove, or one small portion of a lake over a couple of months, or even just weeks or days. These types of projects improve angling opportunities tremendously. But what if the biologists had all year, or even five years to improve angling opportunities? The amount of “spots” an angler could fish would increase greatly and more fish could wind up on the end of a line.

The Table Rock Lake NFHI project is a five-year project designed to improve fish habitat within the lake.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), in cooperation with Bass Pro Shops, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is currently working on a five-year project to maintain and enhance fish habitat in Table Rock Lake. This project is part of the National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI) and the National Fish and

Wildlife Foundation’s More Fish Campaign, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Sport Fish Restoration Act, and is under the umbrella of the Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership. The Table Rock project is serving as a model for this national partnership aimed at improving habitat in reservoirs around the country.

The goals for this project are not just limited to Table Rock Lake. MDC, its partners and private landowners are focusing on the entire Table Rock Lake watershed. The goals include: improve fish habitat within Table Rock Lake, improve the water quality of Table Rock Lake and its tributaries, monitor the effectiveness and longevity of the structures and projects employed, and develop a framework for a broader national program focused on habitat protection and restoration in reservoirs and their watersheds.

Table Rock Habitat

The primary objective for the Table Rock Lake NFHI project is to improve fish habitat within Table Rock Lake. Table Rock Dam was built in the 1950s, and the lake filled to its current level in 1958. This makes Table Rock Lake more than 50 years old. When the lake was first created, much of the Ozark forest in the reservoir basin



PHOTO BY MIKE ALLEN; ILLUSTRATION BY LES FORTENBERRY

was flooded, and the trees and brush provided cover for the lake's expanding fish populations. Throughout the past 50 years, much of that habitat has begun to deteriorate and disappear, reducing the amount of habitat available to fish.

The NFHI project is supplementing the deteriorating habitat with new habitat. Cedar trees, hardwood treetops and recycled Christmas trees are being used to build fish habitat. These types of materials are placed in Table Rock Lake using MDC's "Table Rock Fish Habitat Barge." The habitat barge was built specifically for this purpose by Tracker Marine in Lebanon, Mo. It is a large pontoon-style boat with a hydraulic lift on the front that raises and "dumps" the habitat into the lake.

MDC has contracted another habitat barge—the "Rock Barge"—to place larger habitat structures comprised of rocks and stumps into the lake. This barge has a large half-circle-shaped basin on the front and a hydraulic piston in the

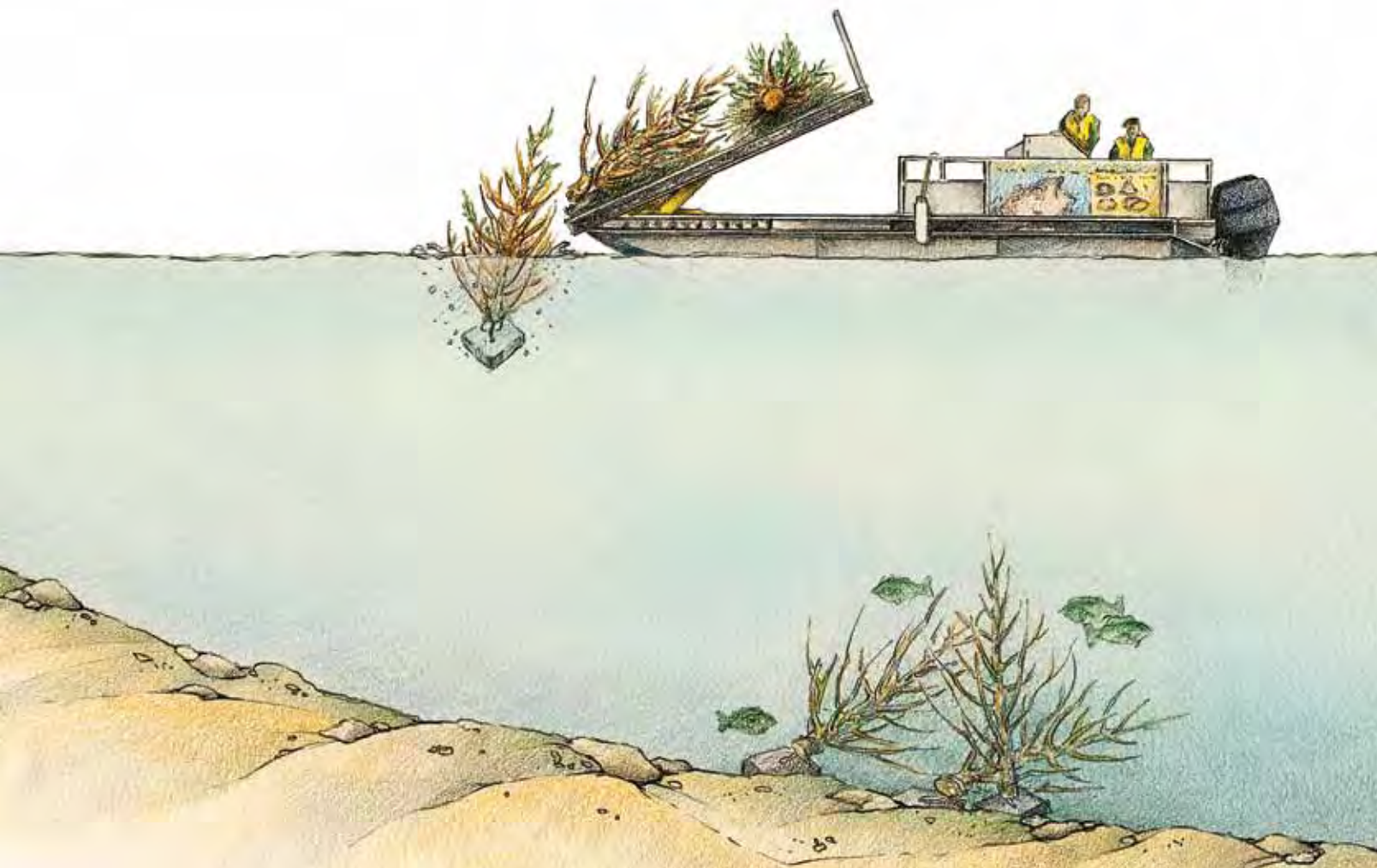
rear that pushes the rock and stumps from the basin off the front of the barge. MDC gets these materials from developers, contractors and landowners in the Table Rock Lake area who are clearing land and need to dispose of them.

To date, 1,460 brushpiles, 104 rock structures, 49 stump fields, 11 combinations and 26 rock "fence" structures have been installed, for a total of 1,650 new habitat structures in Table Rock Lake. These structures were placed in areas and depths that are available for fish during most of the year, were located using GPS, and are available to the public on MDC's website at mdc.mo.gov/node/10182.

Water Quality

Water quality is a critical component of fish habitat. In addition to improving physical habitat, MDC is also helping to improve the water quality of Table Rock Lake by working in the watershed.

Deteriorating fish habitat is supplemented with cedar trees, hardwood treetops and recycled Christmas trees.



Funding has been contributed to project partners such as the James River Basin Partnership and Table Rock Lake Water Quality, Inc., to help with septic tank pump-outs and septic system upgrades within the watershed. This pumping program is part of the James River Basin Partnership's "Pump a Million" campaign and offers a \$50 incentive per pump-out to landowners within the watershed of Table Rock Lake to promote proper maintenance of their septic systems and water quality improvement. More than 2 million gallons of septic tank content have been pumped out under this program. Each participant also receives a packet of educational materials that explains the importance of properly maintaining their septic systems. The program has gotten great reviews and will continue as long as there are funds, interest and need. For more information visit: www.trlwq.org/index_files/Pumpoutprogram.htm.

Evaluating Structures

Another objective of the NFHI project is to monitor and evaluate the structures that are placed in Table Rock Lake. To this end, MDC has designated four evaluation techniques: fish sampling, SCUBA observations, an angler survey and a black bass biotelemetry study. By monitoring fish use of the habitat structures, MDC is learning what techniques and designs work best for placing habitat during the remainder of the NFHI project and in other lakes in Missouri. Information gathered from the evaluation will

In addition to improving physical habitat, MDC is also helping to improve the water quality of Table Rock Lake by working in the watershed.



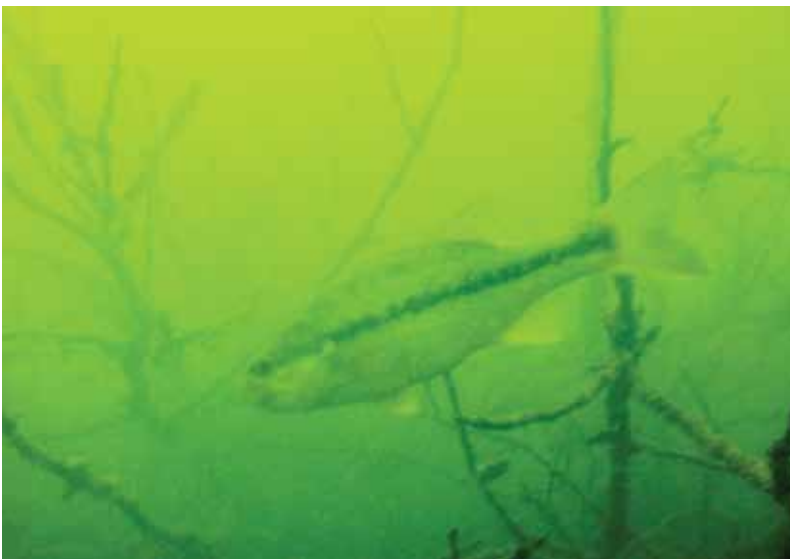
MDC fisheries biologists conduct SCUBA observations in Table Rock Lake to learn what techniques and designs work best for placing habitat during the remainder of the NFHI project.

allow MDC to share ideas and techniques with other states' agencies that are also working to improve fish habitat in reservoirs.

Watershed Health

MDC is working to improve watershed health by protecting eroding stream banks and enhancing riparian corridor conditions. Improving these areas will reduce sedimentation and excess nutrients and will improve in-stream habitat. Five stream bank stabilization projects have been completed to help reduce sediment being deposited into Table Rock Lake. Three other projects within the watershed are currently underway. Cost-share funding may be available to landowners within the Table Rock Lake watershed to help stabilize eroding stream banks. For more information, or to see if you live within the Table Rock Lake watershed, contact the MDC at 417-334-4859.

MDC is also working with contractors to build large boulder structures within the upper mile of Lake Taneycomo, which is the tailwater of Table Rock Lake. This part of Lake Taneycomo is primarily gravel bed with limited fish cover. Large boulder clusters will help congregate fish in this area and allow more areas for anglers to catch fish.





National Program Development

While the habitat project on Table Rock Lake will benefit Missouri anglers, it is also a pilot project designed to serve as a basis for habitat restorations in other large reservoirs throughout the country. The results of efforts on Table Rock Lake will be shared nationwide and will give other reservoir biologists ideas and methods to improve habitat within their reservoirs.

So, now that the area has new fish habitat,

we can look for results. Is that area going to be loaded with fish? Will an angler always be able to find fish off of those trees? The only way to find out is to get out there and fish those areas again. One way for biologists to know if this project is working is if anglers let them know. Visit mdc.mo.gov/node/10182 to download the GPS points, print off a map and go fish some of the habitat structures that have been placed in Table Rock Lake. After all, they were put there with anglers in mind. ▲

Deer Management: Your Farm and Beyond

Building herd quality through conservation cooperatives

by TED SEILER and JASON SUMNERS • photos by DAVID STONNER





T WAS A TYPICAL EARLY-NOVEMBER morning in the bow stand. The sun seemed to hesitate a few moments as it climbed and woke the earth, the last leaves rattled on their branches, and anticipation of the morning's hunt filled my mind.

A buck responded to my brief blows on the grunt call and rattling sequence. I could hear his quick footsteps in the leaves before I had even finished the mock fight. He approached just 15 yards upwind of me and crossed into a wide shooting lane. Then he walked downwind, turned and gradually left the way he came. While I had ample opportunity, and he had respectable headgear, he was not the deer I was after. I estimated he was only 3 ½ years old and knew he had potential to grow larger antlers. I just smiled and thought to myself, just try that next year!

Saline County landowners Clay Sellmeyer (left) and Gary Giger discuss cooperatively managing their lands for hunting. Ongoing communication is key to having a successful co-op.

Be Neighborly

I am lucky I can be so confident that a 3 ½-year-old buck will make it through rifle season and be around to be hunted next year. I am definitely blessed to be able to hunt the area I do, but it also takes work. We spend a lot of time on habitat work that plays an important role in keeping deer within the boundaries of the farm. It allows us to make a lot of the decisions about which deer are harvested. But managing the habitat is only part of the work we do for better deer hunting.

We understand that a 240-acre farm will not hold deer within its boundaries no matter how much habitat work we do. Deer are mobile animals, which makes it difficult for any one landowner to manage them. The home range of an adult doe can range from 400-600 acres, while an adult buck's home range can easily exceed 640 acres, particularly during the rut. Unlike



quail, which can be managed effectively with a 40-acre tract of land, deer walk across 40 acres like it's your living room. Most landowners believe all they can do is make their little piece of heaven as attractive to deer as possible and hope they will spend enough time on their farm to influence which bucks are harvested and which ones are allowed to grow older. The larger the farm, the easier that task becomes, but even large tracts of land (more than 500 acres) are affected by what happens on neighboring farms.

This is not news. Most deer hunters know that we are affected by what happens on neighboring farms. We often cringe when we hear a gunshot from nearby, wondering if that was the demise of the great buck we were after. We become possessive of bucks we've seen or photographed on trail cameras, and we sometimes become secretive about large bucks because we don't want someone else hunting for them.

I have a different solution, and it might even outweigh the habitat improvements you've made for deer. The best thing you can do to improve your local deer herd is *talking*. Communicating with neighbors can make a huge impact on what you see during your hunts.

Common Ground

I have had the privilege of working in Macon, Randolph and Shelby counties as a private land conservationist for the Department of Conservation for the past eight years. I have seen a lot of different farms and visited with many different landowners. Each farm is unique in its soils, cover types and the ground that it borders. In the same way, the management of each farm and the farms around it is unique.

While farms across the state vary widely, the people who own them have a lot in common. Sure, there are tall, short, young and old landowners, and they come from different backgrounds and lifestyles, but their interests and reasons for owning a farm are often similar. Most recreational landowners want plentiful wildlife for hunting or viewing. While there are a lot of landowners who are driven by small game (such as quail and rabbits) or natural community management (such as prairies or savannas), most recreational landowners are primarily motivated by white-tailed deer.

This common interest can be a valuable tool.



Even if your neighbor has a completely different philosophy of deer management than you, just knowing that you both have a keen interest in deer is a good foundation for moving forward. So introduce yourself. You don't even need to mention deer if you don't want to—just be friendly. It will take time, but your goal is to foster a good relationship between neighbors so that you can discuss farm management and hunting successes.

Once you're talking, it's easy to identify common goals. Just don't expect everyone to have the same ones (especially not at first). When everyone is working toward those common goals, we call that a conservation cooperative. I call it better and more enjoyable hunting for everyone involved!

Successful Cooperation

You'll discover big benefits whether you want to formally consider your neighborhood a conservation co-op or not. However, there are some important things to remember when getting started.

You'll need common goals, not identical goals. You and your neighbor both want to hunt mature bucks, but your definitions of "mature" may be different. One person may think a 2 ½-year-old buck is a trophy, while another wants them 4 ½ years or older. That difference does not mean they will not benefit from cooperation. Trying to force specific goals will be counter-productive. Realize that even though your goals are not identical, you do have common goals (more mature bucks), and you can work toward them.

When neighboring landowners work toward common goals for managing their land, it's called a conservation cooperative. Several neighbors working together can provide more food, cover, etc., that will increase the amount of time deer spend in your neighborhood.



The Department of Conservation regulates deer harvest to maintain a sustainable deer herd, but forming a successful neighborhood co-op is up to individual landowners.

Be realistic. The deer population in an area is seldom driven by what happens on a single farm. I often hear people say a co-op will not work in their neighborhood because one neighbor has no interest in changing what he or she harvests. While it is very easy to blame an “uncooperative neighbor” for a declining deer population or a lack of mature bucks, that is rarely the case. The impacts of one landowner harvesting immature bucks or numerous does can be minimized so long as others adjust their personal harvest expectations to meet the overall goal of the neighborhood. By working together you can develop harvest goals that fit your population and improve everyone’s hunting.

Good things take time. Do not expect to be able to introduce yourself to the neighbors

and change the way they manage their farm in a single visit. Think of success coming over the course of years, not months. Don’t give up because you don’t see a change in the first year or two. Keep the communication lines open and the rewards will come.

A nonparticipating landowner does not doom your co-op. Rarely do you get 100-percent participation right out of the gate. Often people are comfortable with what they have and worry a co-op would mean someone else telling them what to do. Keep communication open with everyone in the co-op area and the benefits will become obvious to everyone.

Have fun. The reason you are interested in a co-op is because you are passionate about deer and want to enjoy the results (good deer hunting). Neighborhood gatherings, sharing hunt-



While managing the trigger is a big part of the success of a co-op, habitat management yields big benefits as well. Many landowners are working with 100 acres or less. While you can see large benefits from managing the habitat on these smaller tracts of land, that benefit is magnified if the neighbors are managing their farms, too. Several neighbors working together can provide more food, cover, fawning cover, etc., that will increase the amount of time deer spend in your neighborhood and potentially increase the carrying capacity of the land.

Conservation co-ops can be successful for other species of wildlife, too. Turkeys, quail, rabbits and even waterfowl management can be more successful when you are working on a larger scale. You find success with landowners managing with different species in mind. If your interest is deer and your neighbor is a quail enthusiast, his quail management can help your deer herd and your deer management can help his quail population.

If you and your neighbors would like help forming a neighborhood co-op for deer or other wildlife species, contact your local private land conservationist (see Page 3 for regional phone numbers). While we cannot build and maintain neighborhood relationships for you, we can help by providing technical assistance on habitat improvement projects, providing management workshops and training, and possibly other assistance such as determining appropriate deer harvest to meet your common goals. In the meantime, fire up the grill and start working on those relationships with your newest friends. Before you know it you might get to enjoy not shooting a great buck, too! ▲

By working together in a neighborhood co-op, you can develop harvest goals that fit your population and improve everyone's hunting.

ing stories and making new friends are fun, too. If you look at the co-op as work, it will fail. Keep it fun and it will grow.

Combining People and Tactics

Forming a successful neighborhood co-op is up to individual landowners. The Department of Conservation regulates deer harvest to maintain a sustainable deer herd, but cannot form and maintain good relationships among neighbors or regulate to meet everyone's personal goals. Right now landowners have maximum flexibility in what they harvest, which allows you to manage the deer herd to meet your goals. By communicating with your neighbors you can better understand the local dynamics of the deer populations and the impacts that localized harvest has on the population.



Striped Skunk

These striped Missouri residents can be seen feasting in fields to fatten up for winter.

MY 2011 NATURAL Events Calendar hangs right above my computer so I'm often scanning entries for wildlife photography opportunities. "Striped skunks are fattening up for winter," an entry read for late October. I'd never photographed a skunk before. Maybe this would be my chance. I pushed the thought aside until a few days later when I received a serendipitous call from my friend Jim. "Hey, Danny," the conversation started, "I've been watching skunks feed in a field near my house. Want to give them a try with that camera of yours?" Eager as ever, I outlined a plan to arrive before daylight to set up a friendly ambush, but Jim explained that my usual technique wouldn't be necessary. I could simply walk right up to one of the feeding skunks at first light. Dubious, I advised Jim that I'd never successfully approached a mammal with my camera in broad daylight, but I was listening. Jim explained that he'd already tested his theory, without a camera, and it worked. I could hardly wait for Saturday morning when I could put my friend's plan to the test.

The striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) is common throughout Missouri. It is easily recognizable by its black color, long-haired tail and two white stripes along its upper sides, converging at its head. About the size of a cat, skunks are found along forest borders, fence rows, grassy fields and crop fields. They are also found in towns and suburbs where they can become a nuisance, especially if they decide to take up residence under somebody's porch. Skunks may dig burrows with their powerful claws but often move into dens that have been abandoned by other burrowing mammals.

Usually foraging at the fringes of the day, striped skunks feed on a variety of insects and grubs. They will also eat small animals such as mice, rats, moles, shrews, young rabbits and chipmunks. Skunks also feed on carrion of larger animals when available.

Striped skunks breed in late winter and bear young a couple months later. Typically, a litter size is four to six, and the female cares for the young until autumn, when they disperse. During winter months, skunks become inactive, but they will hunt for food during warm spells. Skunks are considered a furbearer in Missouri and can be hunted or trapped during the legal season.

I arrived at Jim's farmhouse at sunrise and found him sitting on the porch with his binoculars. "I've got one for you," I heard him say as I exited my truck. The skunk was a quarter-mile away, feeding along a hillside. I was to walk up the hill toward the skunk until I lost visual contact, at which time I would look back at Jim for directions. By the time I was halfway up the hill I lost sight of my quarry so I glassed back at Jim and found him providing animated hand signals, not unlike a duck hunter to his Labrador retriever. A few minutes later I stood 15 feet from a young striped skunk, dangerously close to the effective range of its defensive musk glands. Preoccupied with rooting for grubs, the youngster did not appear to see or hear me as I began clicking the shutter. A moment later it began to sniff the air. As it made a beeline for the woods, I wondered if it would soon be washing the human stink off its black and white fur with tomato juice!

—Story and photo by Danny Brown





White River Trace CA

Find excellent quail hunting, bird watching, camping and hiking at this Dent County area.



IF YOU'RE LOOKING for good quail hunting this season, load up your bird dogs and head to White River Trace CA. Like Indian Trail CA to the east, White River Trace CA draws its name from an ancient Osage Indian trail that crosses the area's southeastern corner. Carved into the surface of the land by countless feet over hundreds of years, the "trace" is still visible. During this period of history, the 2,044-acre area was covered with grasslands, glades, savannas and open woodlands. It teemed with wildlife, including songbirds, deer, turkey and bobwhite quail. In the years that followed, however, land use drastically altered the landscape. Intensive grazing and the introduction of exotic, cool-season grasses virtually eliminated native grasses and shrubby growth. Fire suppression allowed trees to engulf the savannas.

By the time the Conservation Department bought the area in 1988, it had few quail because it had almost no quail habitat. The Conservation Department bought the land especially because of its potential for management as habitat for quail and other birds and wildlife that thrive in open lands. The plan was to establish plant communities similar to what existed there originally.

The first step was to replace fescue pastures with a mix of warm-season grasses, including little bluestem, and other native plants, such as partridge pea, native lespedezas and Maximillian sunflower. Fire-tolerant woody plants such as hazelnut, American plum and sumac were part of the restoration effort, and managers continue to use prescribed fire and other techniques to maintain habitat diversity.

Today the area is one of 19 Quail Emphasis Areas. It once again supports a healthy quail population and more than 100 other species of birds. Hunters can pursue a variety of wildlife during season, and anglers will find fair fishing for bass, catfish and sunfish.

Hikers will appreciate several miles of internal service roads, as well as 1.1 miles of the historic Osage Indian Trail. Facilities include a disabled-accessible parking lot and privy. The camping area offers individual sites but no amenities.

To reach the area, which lies about 20 miles due south of Rolla, take Route H west nine miles to Dent County Road 253 and go south 1.3 miles. As always, visit the area's web page (listed below) for special notices, brochure and map before traveling.

—Bonnie Chasteen, photo by David Stonner

Recreation opportunities: Fishing, birding, camping and hunting for deer, turkey, doves, rabbits and squirrels

Unique features: Two lakes and four ponds annually stocked with channel catfish

For More Information

Call 573-368-2225 or visit mdc.mo.gov/a8917.





Hunting and Fishing Calendar

FISHING

OPEN CLOSE

Black Bass (certain Ozark streams, see the *Wildlife Code*)
5/28/11 2/29/12

impoundments and other streams year-round

Bullfrogs and Green Frogs
Sunset Midnight
6/30/11 10/31/11

Nongame Fish Giggling
9/15/11 1/31/12

Trout Parks
3/01/11 10/31/11

HUNTING

OPEN

CLOSE

Coyote
5/09/11 3/31/12

Crow
11/01/11 3/3/12

Deer

Archery
9/15/11 11/11/11
11/23/11 1/15/12

Firearms

Urban Zones
10/07/11 10/10/11

Early Youth
11/05/11 11/06/11

November
11/12/11 11/22/11

Antlerless
11/23/11 12/04/11

Muzzleloader
12/17/11 12/27/11

Late Youth
1/07/12 1/08/12

Dove
9/01/11 11/09/11

Furbearers
11/15/11 1/31/12

Groundhog
5/09/11 12/15/11

Pheasant

Youth (North Zone only)
10/29/11 10/30/11

North Zone
11/1/11 1/15/12

Southeast Zone
12/01/11 12/12/11

Quail
11/1/11 1/15/12

Youth
10/29/11 10/30/11

Rabbits
10/1/11 2/15/12

Rails (Sora and Virginia)
9/01/11 11/09/11

Squirrels
5/28/11 2/15/12

Turkey

Archery
9/15/11 11/11/11

11/23/11 1/15/12

Fall
10/01/11 10/31/11

Waterfowl
please see the *Waterfowl Hunting Digest* or
see mdc.mo.gov/node/3830

Wilson's (common) Snipe
9/01/11 12/16/11

Woodcock
10/15/11 11/28/11

TRAPPING

OPEN

CLOSE

Beavers & Nutria
11/15/11 3/31/12

Furbearers
11/15/11 1/31/12

Otters & Muskrats
11/15/11 2/20/12

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* or the current summaries of *Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations* and *Missouri Fishing Regulations*, *The Spring Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, *the Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, *the Waterfowl Hunting Digest* and *the Migratory Bird Hunting Digest*. For more information visit mdc.mo.gov/node/130 or permit vendors.



Contributors

MICHAEL ALLEN has been employed with the Conservation Department for seven years and is the fisheries biologist in charge of implementing the National Fish Habitat Initiative Project on Table Rock Lake. When not on the lake for work, he is often there for recreation—fishing, SCUBA diving or hunting nearby.



BRETT DUFUR, an MDC editor, is writing a history of the Department for its 75th anniversary. He has authored numerous books on Missouri's outdoors including the Katy Trail, wine country and the Lewis and Clark Trail. He lives in Rocheport with his family and loves to paddle the Missouri River and explore wild places.

TED SEILER is a private land conservationist for MDC in Macon, Randolph and Shelby counties. When not helping landowners meet their wildlife management goals, he enjoys managing his small acreage and spending time in the great outdoors with his family. His favorite activities include hunting, fishing and trapping.



JASON SUMMERS, a native of Benton County, is a deer biologist for MDC and oversees the state's deer management program. Jason resides in Columbia with his family. Whether he's hiking in the mountains, chasing whitetails, or crappie fishing, Jason enjoys spending time in the great outdoors with family and friends.

AGENT NOTES

Working with citizens for a safe deer season.

OFTEN DURING ROUTINE contact with hunters I hear the comment, "This is the first time I have ever been checked." Most counties in the state have just one conservation agent assigned to it, so this is not surprising.

A lot of these contacts occur in the field while the hunter is still in possession of a firearm. Please remember to always keep the muzzle of your firearm pointed in a safe direction and follow the instructions given by the agent. An accidental discharge can occur while unloading, especially those firearms with external hammers. Don't unload your firearm unless asked to do so. During these checks the agent may ask to inspect your hunting permit and photo identification, firearms, ammunition, coolers and any game you may have. Hunters are required by law to allow such inspection by a conservation agent or other law enforcement officer in their jurisdiction. Just because you are getting checked does not mean you have done anything wrong. Most hunters checked are not in violation and are happy to see the conservation agent patrolling the area they hunt.

Agents work long hours during the deer seasons on routine patrol and responding to the public's needs. Agents also assist landowners with trespass and other violations that occur on their property. If you call an agent with a question or to report a violation and get their voice mail, be patient. The agent will call you back as soon as possible. You may also call any of the regional offices with general questions (see Page 3 for phone numbers) or Operation Game Thief at 1-800-392-1111 to report violations. With more than 500,000 deer hunters in the field and 168 agents on patrol, public cooperation is critical. Conservation agents ensure compliance with the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* and other state laws, helping to provide citizens safe opportunities to enjoy Missouri's outdoors.



Shannon Smith is the conservation agent for Schuyler County. If you would like to contact the agent for your county, phone your regional conservation office listed on Page 3.





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“I Am Conservation”

Farmer Chuck Weldon stands in a turnip food plot he planted on his land for deer. “When you farm and you love to hunt, both seasons fall at the same time,” says Weldon, “so it becomes tough to do both. But I love both.” Weldon says he and his father have several food plots scattered around their farms in Daviess and Caldwell counties. Weldon calculates that close to 100 acres among their corn and soybeans are devoted strictly to wildlife food plots. “It’s tough sometimes to balance my land for wildlife and agriculture,” says Weldon, “but we feel by planting hidey-hole food plots and trying to keep our herd numbers in check, we both can coexist. If you love to hunt and you farm, you have to do what you can to protect both your interests.” Weldon says he enjoys the management side as much, or more than, the hunting side. “Growing and harvesting big bucks might not be for everybody, but by practicing good management, I protect my pocketbook and I protect the herd. And, maybe if I’m lucky, I add another trophy to my wall!” —*Photo by David Stonner*